

The Partners Sessions & Beyond

Curriculum Topics

This section contains a description of the Partners curriculum topics and ideas for follow-up with graduates. Coordinators, participants, and presenters will greatly benefit from reviewing the relevant topic in *Curriculum Highlights* (<http://www.partnersinpolicymaking.com/curriculum.html>), the online courses, and the blended learning module prior to the training sessions.

For each topic, we outline:

- Purpose of the topic
- Competencies participants should achieve
- Considerations for presentation style and skill-building activities
- Homework options
- Key terms

At the end of the section are ideas for follow-up with Partners graduates.

Topic Order

The Partners curriculum topics are designed to be comprehensive and sequential:

- Comprehensive so Partners participants acquire the competencies;
- Sequential so the topics flow and build upon each other.

To that end, Coordinators should carefully consider the order of each topic.

There are eleven topic headings. The model requires eight sessions to cover these topics. Some of the topics are stand-alone – one topic will fill the entire weekend. Other topics are combined. The combination of topics should be logical and the topics should complement each other. The order presented on the next page is strongly recommended. Changes can be made to accommodate the legislative session.

Session Scheduling

Sessions generally run from noon on Friday (or Saturday) until 9 PM and from early morning on Saturday (or Sunday) to 3:00-4:00 PM. These time frames are necessary to assure the minimum 128 hours of competency-based instruction.

Meals should be served in a room other than the session room. This avoids disruptions from meal set-up and clean-up.



Suggested Order of Session Topics

Session 1
History

Session 2
Inclusive Education

Session 3
Service Coordination/Case Management
Vision
Local Government

Session 4
Supported/Competitive Employment
Supported Living/Home of Your Own

Session 5
Community Organizing
Advocacy

Session 6
State Legislation

Session 7
Federal Legislation

Session 8
Parliamentary Procedure &
Serving on Boards
Graduation

NOTE: Assistive technology is not a stand alone topic but can be incorporated throughout the program, particularly in Sessions 2 and 4.

History

Purpose

The history of people with disabilities in our culture and society affects what happens today, and in the future. We must know where we've been before we can know where we're going and how to get where we want to be.

Competencies

- Participants will have an increased knowledge of the historical perspective of services for people with disabilities.
- Participants will be able to describe the history and role of the parent movement.
- Participants will be able to describe the history and role of the independent living movement.
- Participants will be able to describe the history and role of the self-advocacy movement.

Presentation Style and Skill-Building Activities

- This opening weekend is critical in setting the tone for the remainder of the program. Partners participants need a thorough and comprehensive view of history to provide a context for their dreams and actions for the future.
- See the Partners *Curriculum Highlights* for concepts.
- Lecture with visuals. Videos/DVDs/YouTube must be captioned.
- Videos on Ed Roberts, People First and/or Independent Living.
- Personal testimonials.
- Personal timelines or group timelines of history.
- Panel of Partners graduates.
- Self-advocacy speakers.
- Large/small group exercises on use of People First language.
- Ice-breaker for introductions of participants.
- What is Partners in Policymaking? Discussion of ground rules and contract.

Homework Options

- Visit an institution or large congregate care facility and/or an independent living center. If your area does not have an institution, interview an adult with disabilities who has lived in an institution.

- Reading materials provided by instructors and/or Coordinator.
- Partners DVDs:

“Partners in Policymaking: Sharing the Challenge”

(October 1998) explains the purpose of the Partners Program and the impact of the program on participants from the perspective of experts in the field, Partners graduates, and elected officials/policymakers. Videotape/ DVD formats are available upon request.

The North Carolina Partners Program produced a DVD, **“Partners for People.”** The benefits of this leadership training program and the personal growth experienced by participants are highlighted in their testimonials and stories. **“Partners for People”** can be viewed at the Council website, on their home page, at www.nc-ddc.org.

The Virginia Partners Program produced a DVD, **“Partners in Policymaking: The Fight for Inclusion for People with Disabilities.”** This educational documentary is about three Partners graduates, the life experiences that each brought to the program, and how the Partners program prepared them for their new leadership roles in influencing public policy.

Contact the Virginia Partners Coordinator, Teri Barker-Morgan at Teri.Barker@VBPD.virginia.gov or call (804) 786-9381 for more information about this DVD and/or to receive a free copy.

Key Terms

Independent Living Movement - Adults with disabilities seeking to achieve autonomy; to break free from institutional and/or custodial care. Independence means taking control of one's life.



Always think about who might be able to serve as a back-up speaker. You are welcome to contact the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities to verify the previous experiences of speakers. A current National Speakers list is available upon request.



Self-Advocacy Movement - Adults with developmental disabilities speaking for themselves, instead of others speaking for them (People First Movement).

Parent Movement - Parents seeking basic civil rights, including the right of public education, for their children with disabilities.

People First Language - Replacing stereotypical words by putting the person before the disability.

Inclusive Education and Lifelong Learning

Purpose

Partners participants learn how children with disabilities can be successfully included in general education classrooms in their neighborhood school and how adults can enroll in post-secondary education. Current laws mandate a free appropriate public education, but the majority of children with disabilities are still “placed” in segregated settings. Partners participants need to learn how to be equal participants in team meetings.

Competencies

- Participants will be able to describe the reasons for an inclusive, quality education.
- Participants will be able to outline specific strategies to achieve an inclusive, quality education.
- Participants will be able to demonstrate how to be effective in team meetings.

Presentation and Skill-Building Activities

- See the Partners *Curriculum Highlights* for concepts.
- Lecture on best practices and how to achieve inclusion must be done by a national speaker with appropriate visuals (videos/DVDs must be captioned).
- Include information on inclusive early intervention for younger children and higher education opportunities for adults.
- Presentation about, and practice in, advocacy and assertiveness skills at an Individual Education Program (IEP) meeting.
- Roundtable discussion with key individuals from the Department of Education. (This should be a positive exchange, not adversarial).

Homework Options

- Assess or rewrite IEPs of children of participants.

- Assess the level of inclusion in local schools.
- Attend a meeting of a local or state Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) to discuss inclusion policies in a school district.
- Identify significant persons in a local school district (principals, special education director and superintendent); interview them to discuss inclusion.
- Attend school board meetings; get to know board members and other key officials.
- Videotape or audiotape yourself to review/improve performance in an IEP meeting
- Check out post-secondary education opportunities and options.
- Learn more about special ed law by visiting <http://idea.ed.gov/>.
- Check on the usage of technology in a local school – is it for ALL students?
- Read materials provided by speaker and Coordinator.

Hints on Selecting Education Roundtable presenters for the evening session

- Roundtable presenters should be representatives from early childhood, transition, due process and compliance, post secondary education, and other divisions. Each presenter should briefly explain what he/she does; then the Partners participants should ask questions. Introduce each person in the group. The officials then move to the tables in the meeting room – one educator per table. At a designated time, they rotate to other tables (“speed dating”). By the end of the exercise, each educator has visited with each table. Partners participants should be prepped on etiquette, protocol, and what issues should be addressed prior to the roundtable, followed by a debriefing after the departure of the roundtable members.
- Some states have systems-change projects that are working on inclusive education issues. Make sure this session creates opportunities for Partners participants to meet as many state resource people as possible.
- Most education board and department employees are resource people for Partners participants to call upon. Build alliances with these individuals.
- The idea is that every Partners participant makes a connection with several school/education officials.
- Avoid featuring a speaker who opposes inclusion or who has negative stories to tell. *Partners is not about “equal time.”* It’s about best practice and “what’s possible.”

Key Terms

Inclusion - Children with disabilities are full-time members in chronologically age-appropriate general education classrooms, in their neighborhood schools, with the necessary supports, curriculum modifications, and/or assistive technology.

I.E.P. - Individualized Education Program - An annual plan for a child’s education, written by a school team, which includes the parents and the student; mandated by IDEA.

IDEA - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act - The federal law which mandates education for children with disabilities (P.L. 108-446).



Local speakers can give testimonials about inclusion.

Service Coordination by Local/ County Government² and Vision

Purpose

Partners participants need to be able to compare best practices in service coordination/case management to the policies and practices of the service coordination offered in their area. With budget cuts becoming the norm in many places, and with state and/or federal responsibilities being shifted to local governments and/or non-profit organizations, its important for Partners to understand how these changes impact the lives of people with disabilities and consider what improvements can be made in service coordination.

Competencies

- Participants will be able to demonstrate their knowledge of the service coordination system and what services may be available.
- Participants will be able to demonstrate how to meet with a public official and discuss issues.
- Participants will create a shared vision with fellow participants for the year 2020 (and beyond) for people with disabilities.

Presentation Style and Skill-Building Activities

- See the Partners *Curriculum Highlights* for concepts.
- The basics of how to meet and speak with a public official or policymaker can be covered for the first time in this session, if the order of topics does not vary from the one described on page 22.
- Use *Making Your Case* to introduce participants to meeting with public officials. Copies of this publication can be ordered online at www.mnddc.org/extra/publication.htm. The interactive e-learning course “**Partners in Making Your Case**” can be accessed directly at www.partnersinpolymaking.com, and is intended to supplement and reinforce the knowledge and skills presented in the classroom session.

² For locations where county government is not applicable, Partners should develop relationships with local officials, such as school boards or city/municipal officials who take on similar roles.

- Lecture from a national presenter on preparing to meet with public officials is critical, followed by small group exercises to prepare a short presentation on a particular issue. Local government officials should be invited to hear from participants about issues of importance to them with round table discussions. These officials should give real feedback on Partners presentations.
- Representatives from local advocacy groups and intergovernmental associations can provide important information on community services.
- Building a shared vision – a participatory exercise involving a “high school reunion” and an opportunity to build a collective vision for the year 2020 and beyond. Learning to “dream big” is critical for Partners participants to learn before they can create change. The Joel Barker video, *The Power of Vision*, can be a helpful tool.

Homework Options

- Prepare a brief outline of the major points surrounding a critical disability issue to discuss with a local public official prior to the next session.
- Attend a local meeting or write a local official to introduce yourself and discuss a critical disability issue. Be prepared to discuss the experience during the next Partners session and turn in a written summary.
- Investigate local government web sites. How much of their business is conducted on line? Are the services provided online the type of services that people with disabilities use?
- Investigate the availability of Internet and other electronic information resources through local public libraries, university community outreach, or extension services.

Key Terms

Service Coordination (also referred to as case management) - Services that are available to people with developmental disabilities to help them become more self determined; and gain access to social, medical, educational, financial, and/or other services/benefits.



Key Terms

Assistive Technology Device - Any item, equipment, or system that improves the lives of people with disabilities.

High-Tech, Low-Tech, No-Tech - The range of sophistication of an assistive technology device.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) - Technology devices or systems to supplement or replace oral communication; can include "talking machines," cell phones or electronic tablets/pads with communication "apps," eye-gaze technology, simple communication cards, or other methods.

Positioning - For persons with physical disabilities, the correct seating systems, including wheelchairs and other positioning devices, to maintain optimum health, freedom, inclusion, and productivity.

Smart Homes - Centralized and/or electronic control of lighting, appliances, and other products in the home, to improve convenience, comfort, energy efficiency, and security.

Universal Design - Barrier-free and/or easy-to-use products, buildings, environments, and/or programs/services that are equally accessible to people with and without disabilities.

For speakers on assistive technology,
also contact the following national organizations on technology:

Rehabilitation Engineering and
Assistive Technology Society of North America
1700 North Moore Street, Suite 1540
Arlington VA 22209
703-524-6686
TTY:703-524-6639
www.resna.org

AbleNet, Inc.
2625 Patton Road
Roseville MN 55113
800-322-0956
www.ablenetinc.com

Assistive Technology

Purpose

For people with disabilities, assistive technology can make the difference between independence and dependence.

Competencies

- Participants will be able to describe the state-of-the-art technologies for people with significant disabilities and apply technology devices to their own situation.

Presentation Style and Skill-Building Activities

- See the Partners *Curriculum Highlights* for concepts.
- Lecture with visuals, and demonstrations to illustrate the critical "why" and "how" of technology (videotapes/DVDs must be captioned).
- Presentation/information on local/state assistive technology centers and/or services available.
- Small-group exercises on how ordinary, off-the-shelf products can be utilized as assistive technology.
- Invite your technology council/assistive technology center to discuss how to access technology resources within your area. Find out if your area has a computer lending program, a mobile "library" on technology, or other services on assistive technology.

Homework Options

- Visit a technology center or a rehabilitation technology laboratory.
- Get retail catalogs of assistive technology devices and aids.
- Visit electronics stores to learn more about ordinary products available.
- Interview a therapist or other expert in the area of assistive technology and adaptive equipment.
- Read materials provided by instructors and Coordinator.
- Interview someone with a disability who uses assistive technology or adaptive equipment.

Community Organizing and Advocacy

Purpose

In previous sessions, Partners participants will have learned about best practices in disability issues relating to education, employment, community living, and legislative issues. It is also important for Partners participants to learn how to advocate for systems change in these topic areas, including organizing their communities for action and using the media.

Competencies

- Participants will identify strategies for beginning and sustaining grassroots level organizing around specific issues.
- Participants will understand the role of, and how to use, the media to effectively promote their issues.

Presentation Style and Skill-Building Activities

- See the Partners *Curriculum Highlights* for concepts.
- To teach community organizing, a national presenter and small group exercises are a must. Select an issue that's identifiable, small, and winnable. Have the groups plan a full campaign that includes a variety of tactics such as using the media, organizing meetings, and direct actions.
- For advocacy, representatives of state advocacy organizations can present a round table discussion on their advocacy organizations. Have presenters bring literature from their organizations for all Partners participants.
- Small-group exercises can help Partners participants learn techniques of successful advocacy.
- A member of the local media can present information on how to gain press coverage of disability issues. Partners can practice TV interviews on camera.
- Invite leaders of local, regional, or state advocacy organizations. Search for community organizers associated with churches, poverty groups, unions, or social justice organizations to be part of a panel.



Community Organizing -- Groups of people who share similar or related interests coming together and joining forces to change a situation or problem

Key Terms

Community Organizing - Mobilizing groups and individuals in a community around a particular issue to create positive change.

Homework Options

- Join a coalition that deals with a social justice issue. Pick a local project in your home community that's winnable. Build alliances with others.
- Research members of the local media to determine who covers, or is interested in, any of the following: education, employment, health and human services, legislation/politics, and/or disability issues. Make contact with the appropriate persons in the media and offer to be a resource.
- Join a listserv when advocating for specific issues, including legislative and policy decisions at local, state, and national levels.
- Read materials provided by instructors and Coordinator.
- Review online forums (listservs, newsgroups, chat rooms) on issues in which you are interested. Investigate online action alerts.

State Legislation³

Purpose

In order to influence policymakers at the state level, Partners participants need to be competent in and comfortable with the state legislative process. Partners participants all across the country have influenced legislation with their personal testimonies. This is a powerful avenue for systems change. Individuals must have the opportunity to practice giving testimony before real legislators and/or staff members. When the time comes for the real thing, Partners participants will be ready.

Competencies

- Participants will be able to describe how a bill becomes a law at the state level.
- Participants will be able to demonstrate successful techniques for advocating for services to meet the needs of unserved and underserved individuals.
- Participants will be able to prepare and deliver testimony for legislative hearings.

Presentation Style and Skill-Building Activities

- This is a stand-alone topic for one entire weekend.
- Lecture with visuals on the state legislative process by state legislator or legislative aide/staff (videotapes/DVDs must be captioned).

³ For locations that do not have a state policymaking level, please integrate these competencies into the session on another appropriate level of government.

- Tour the state Capitol to become familiar with the building(s).
- Mock hearing on real issue(s) at the Capitol to allow every Partners participant to deliver testimony in a realistic fashion. Invite experienced lobbyists (or other trainers experienced in public policy) to serve as coaches to assist and support the development of testimony. Invite legislators (and/or staff) to conduct mock hearings and to provide feedback to Partners participants on their testimonies.
- Short presentation by representative of Governor's Office about applying for governor-appointed positions and membership on committees.
- Provide handouts, including state legislative directory.
- Have Partners participants sign up for committee schedules, weekly summaries of legislative activities, email listservs, and other pertinent materials.
- Have Partners participants meet with their legislators or staff assistants individually at the Capitol. (This may require a change in the training session to Sunday/Monday or midweek.)

Homework Options

- "Shadow" (follow around) a state legislator for a day.
- Attend legislative hearings on any subject to get familiar with the process.
- Contact a state legislator by phone or letter to discuss specific legislation. This also makes the Partner's name known to the legislator.
- Search state legislative web site. See what critical legislative information is available, then evaluate its usefulness and timeliness.
- Send letters; make phone calls; testify at a hearing.
- Become active.



When selecting presenters within your state, consider contacting the Governor's Office, legislative staff, lobbyists, legislators, and disability lobbyists. This can be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Partners participants to really get to know legislators and their staff.

Key Terms

Supported/Competitive Employment

Employment in a real job, for real pay in one's community.

Natural Supports - Using the same support system used by people who don't have disabilities (co-workers and friends) instead of agency job coaches or other paid assistance.

Customized Employment - A flexible process designed to personalize the employment relationship between a job candidate and an employer in a way that meets the needs of both. It is based on an individualized match between the strengths, conditions, and interests of a job candidate and the identified business needs of an employer. Customized Employment utilizes an individualized approach to employment planning and job development—one person at a time ... one employer at a time. (Source: U.S. Department of Labor; Office of Disability Employment Policy)

There are probably many resource people within your state who are active in supported/competitive employment. The “best practice” part of this topic must be done by a national speaker in order to gain the national perspective. An in-state speaker could supplement the presentation by the national speaker.

Supported/Competitive Employment

Purpose

Too many people with disabilities don't have an answer for one question: “What do you do for a living?” Real employment for real wages is a right most of us take for granted. For people with disabilities, the need is the same – to earn a living, to have a purpose, to achieve, to be connected and to have an identity.

In the past, the expectation was that people with disabilities would do best in a sheltered environment. Now we know that with the appropriate modifications and supports, people with disabilities can be successful in the careers of their choice.

Competency

- Participants will be able to describe the importance of supported/competitive employment opportunities.

Presentation Style and Skill-Building Activities

- See the Partners *Curriculum Highlights* for concepts.
- Lecture with visuals by national speaker on best practices and “what’s possible” in employment of people with disabilities (videotapes/DVDs must be captioned), including Customized Employment.
- Information on “career vision” for people with disabilities, instead of only getting entry level jobs.
- Large-or small-group discussion or exercise on natural supports – where to find them and how to get them.

Homework Options

- Create an employment position that uses the principles of customized employment.
- Develop a “career vision” utilizing natural supports. Investigate the impact of technology on employment of people with disabilities.
- Reading materials provided by instructors and Coordinator.

Supported Living/Home of Your Own

Purpose

It is important for people with disabilities to be included in the communities in which they live, to have a sense of belonging. For people with disabilities to achieve full inclusion, support may be needed. When the supports are in place, home ownership, independence, control over one's destiny, participation in and contribution to one's community are all possible. Partners participants need the skills to know how to get and maintain those supports.

Competency

- Participants will understand the types of supports necessary for creating a positive home environment.

Presentation Style and Skill-Building Activities

- See the Partners *Curriculum Highlights* for concepts.
- These topics can be presented in the same session, or they can be divided between two different sessions (supported living and family support) and combined with other appropriate topics.
- Lecture with visuals by national speaker(s) on best practices and “what’s possible” in supported living and family support issues (videotapes/DVDs must be captioned).
- Small-group exercises to teach/practice person-centered planning/self-directed planning activities.
- Large- or small-group discussion/exercise on natural supports – where to find them, how to get them.
- Lecture on support systems at the state level for adults and children with disabilities, including family support and Medicaid waivers.

Homework Options

- Visit both congregate living arrangements (ICF/DD, small group home, large group home) and a “home of your own” location.
- Identify natural supports in the community.
- Identify ordinary activities and locations that people with disabilities can utilize in their own communities to promote inclusion.
- Read materials provided by instructors and Coordinator.

Key Terms

Supported/Independent Living - Living in a typical home or apartment of one's choice and choosing with whom to live; using the supports of one's choice (natural supports or paid supports).

Natural Supports - The same unpaid typical community supports used by people who don't have disabilities: friends, neighbors, and co-workers.

Family Support - Funding and services to enable families to keep children with disabilities in their home environment instead of out of home.

Person-Centered Planning - Has multiple meanings; this process refers to placing the person with a disability first, beginning with strength, gifts, and capacities, and not test scores.

To ensure participants learn best practices within these topics, national speakers are needed to present “what’s possible.” Local speakers can provide perspectives on Independent Living Centers in the state and on service coordination/state service systems, family support and Medicaid waivers.



Enlist the help of Congressional staff members in your area. Also, seek out lobbyists in the disability field and others who work at the federal level.

Federal Legislation⁴

Purpose

Becoming competent in federal legislative issues has never been more critical for Partners participants; they must learn how and when to influence their legislators and other policymakers at the federal level.

Competency

- Participants will be able to prepare for and meet with Congressional delegation members or staff.
- Participants will be able to identify critical federal issues and the process by which they can personally address their concerns.

Presentation Style and Skill-Building Activities

- See the Partners *Curriculum Highlights* for concepts.
- This topic can be presented with supported living/home of your own or supported/competitive employment, or with other appropriate topics.
- Lecture with visuals by national speaker to demonstrate the legislative processes within federal government (videotapes/DVDs must be captioned).
- Update on current and future events/hot topics at the federal level relating to disability issues and funding.
- Invite Congressional staff to attend this session in order to role play “meeting a public official” and help participants learn protocol and etiquette.
- Small-group activity to simulate a group visit to a federal legislator; have Congressional staff critique efforts.
- Presentations on federal legislation that is pending.

Homework Options

- Call or visit the local office of a U.S. Senator or Representative.
- Write letters or email federal officials about a current issue (if appropriate) or simply inform them of the issues facing people with disabilities in the area.
- Volunteer to work on a disability advisory committee of a member of Congress.
- Develop a relationship with the local staff person of a Senator/Representative.
- Offer to provide ongoing information about disability issues to members of Congress.
- Obtain a Congressional directory.

⁴ For locations that do not have a federal policymaking level, please integrate these competencies into sessions on another level of government, as appropriate.

Parliamentary Procedure and Serving on Boards

Purpose

Partners participants have learned about best practices in disability issues relating to education, community living, and legislative issues. They have learned how to organize communities and use the media. They also need to know how to run an effective meeting, and participate effectively in a meeting.

Competencies

- Participants will be able to demonstrate proper procedures for conducting a meeting.
- Participants will gain a basic understanding of parliamentary procedure and serving on boards.

Presentation Style and Skill-Building Activities

- See the Partners *Curriculum Highlights* for concepts.
- Lecture providing “how to” information on boards, meetings, and parliamentary procedure, with small-group exercises to help participants practice skills for planning and conducting successful meetings.
- The idea of studying parliamentary procedure may not be appealing to most people, but it is a very important topic to enable Partners participants to influence their futures and the organizations with which they’re affiliated. Happily, there are speakers who can present an entertaining, engaging, and educational approach to this topic. Most Partners participants respond with very positive evaluations.
- Board training may be widely-available through United Way, League of Women Voters, and other community associations.

Homework Options

- Read materials from presenters.
- Analyze the most recent or the next meeting you attend(ed) for its use of appropriate parliamentary procedure.

Key Terms

Parliamentary Procedure - The official protocol used in board meetings.

The following groups may also be helpful in securing speakers on Parliamentary Procedure:

**American Institute of
Parliamentarians**
550 M Ritchie Hwy, Suite 271
Severna Park, MD 21146
888-664-0428
Fax: 410-544-4640
www.aipparl.org
E-mail:
aip@parliamentaryprocedure.org

**National Association of
Parliamentarians**
213 South Main Street
Independence, MO 64050-3808
816-833-3892
888-NAP-2929
Fax: 816-833-3893
<http://parliamentarians.org>
E-mail: hq@nap2.org

Graduation

The end of the Partners year and the beginning of new lives, new dreams, and new realities for people with disabilities and families in your state.

Ensure that your state's graduation reflects the quality of your entire program.



Graduation

Graduation is a time of reflection and renewal. The eighth and final session will include a ceremony to honor graduating Partners participants and send them on their way. The scheduled curriculum needs to be covered on Friday afternoon and evening, and Saturday morning. The graduation ceremonies can begin with Saturday's lunch.

Invite a representative from the **Governor's office and/or a state legislator** to present a short congratulatory message to the Partners participants. In addition, invite representatives from your state's Council on Developmental Disabilities (or other funding source) to the Saturday luncheon and graduation. But remember to keep the focus on the graduates, not on invited guests.

After lunch, with all Partners participants and guests in attendance, each Partner can take a few minutes to describe what the program has meant to him/her and to briefly outline what they plan to do with their new skills. For most, graduation is a very emotional time.

Some programs encourage Partners participants to invite family members to the luncheon and/or any specific graduation activities. Others encourage Partners participants to extend a personal invitation to policymakers (state or Congressional members, heads of agencies, local politicians) to attend graduation as their guests. This is a prime opportunity to showcase the Partners program to interested guests. Coordinators may want to discuss graduation options with the class.

In many states, a group photograph is taken of the class at the sixth session. If the first one doesn't turn out well, a second photograph can be taken at the seventh session. This memento is presented to each Partner at graduation. Partners participants should also receive a graduation certificate; pins or bags with the Partners in Policymaking® name may also be given to graduates. Advocacy organizations may donate complimentary memberships to graduates.

Between the seventh and eighth sessions, provide Partners participants with a professional press release from the funding agency which they can send to their local media.

Plan your final session so that graduation ceremonies are the last item on the agenda. All the training should be completed prior to the actual graduation. Ceremonies at any other time during the weekend don't make sense! Graduation testimonials/presentations by Partners graduates, greetings from faculty, and messages from other states can add to the celebration.

Other Possible Topics

Behavior

Behavior is often a barrier to inclusion for some people with disabilities. This issue can be resolved when behavior is viewed as a form of communication and methods and supports are used to lessen or prevent "inappropriate" behaviors. Partners participants should be able to describe the importance of these positive approaches to behavior change.

Presentation style and skill-building options include combining this topic with a complementary one; a presentation by a national speaker on best practices and "what's possible" in positive behavior approaches; and role-play and small-group exercises to demonstrate methods and interactions. Homework is to read materials provided by instructors and Coordinator.



What are Partners participants doing after they graduate?

Do you ever hear from them again?

Do they ever hear from you again?

Do you know where graduates are?

Do you know what they're doing?

If you don't know, who does?

Beyond Partners

Is there any way Partners graduates stay connected with each other or with what's happening at the Council on Developmental Disabilities, the funding organization, or other significant disability organization(s)?

Are Partners graduates viewed as a valuable group in your state? Do you get requests along the lines of, "Do you know a Partners graduate who can ... (present testimony, serve on a board, write an editorial, appear on TV, provide technical assistance)?" If not, something's amiss.

As Coordinator, you have the privilege of connecting your graduates to those in your state who can use their Partners expertise along with their own life experiences to create positive changes. Graduates have the responsibility to use their training in ways that enhance their own lives, the lives of a family member, and the lives of people with disabilities in their communities. Each person has her/his own unique gifts and talents to contribute.

Some graduates may not require any post-graduate support. They're out in their communities, doing what they're supposed to: changing systems – changing the world!

Other graduates may need some assistance with networking and staying abreast of the issues. All graduates could benefit from regular communication from the funding agency or organization that operates the Partners program.

Use the following methods of post-graduate support:

- **Graduate workshops:** Bring a class back together six months after graduation and/or have one training weekend per year, bringing together every graduate of your program. These activities are funded in whole or in part by the funding agency. They provide graduates with an opportunity to reconnect with graduates from the same class, make linkages with graduates from other classes, and get the latest information on best practices in disability services. These events should also provide opportunities for Partners graduates to expand their networks of policymaker contacts.
- **Communication:** Ensure that Partners graduates are on the lists or connected to the Council on Developmental Disabilities; Protection & Advocacy agency; University Centers for Excellence; organizations/agencies affiliated with disability advocacy, systems change, and legislative issues; and other listservs or social media.

- Make sure these groups notify Partners graduates of special events, training, and new resources. These contacts will help Partners participants continue to build their leadership skills long after graduation.
- Some states report they assist their graduates in setting up mentorship programs after graduation with policymakers in the state. Graduates spend 60 volunteer hours over one year with their mentors.
- One state provided post-graduate support by sending Partners graduates to Washington, D.C. to attend governmental seminars; the funding agency covered all expenses.
- Compile and distribute Partners directories, with names, addresses, photos, and brief bios of each Partners graduate.
- One way to keep Partners graduates active in systems change is to provide funding to enable Partners graduates to present legislative testimony and make conference presentations.
- Refer Partners graduates to the national Partners in Policymaking listservs⁵, web pages for continued resources and national networking, and Facebook pages (www.partnersinpolicymaking.com/resourceslistserv.html). There may be a state web site where participants can be directed and/or create a listserv of Partners graduates in your state so announcements can easily be sent to them. Promotional material and other technical assistance on using these Internet tools are available from the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (www.mnddc.org).



Use the long-term surveys (see Quality Improvement, page 53) to compile critical information about activities after graduation. Remember that your state has invested thousands of dollars in leadership training—make sure you have the documentation to prove that the funder's dollars are resulting in Partners efforts in systems change. Your funding organization expects it! These surveys also provide key information about the types of support Partners graduates need.

⁵ To subscribe and unsubscribe to the Partners in Policymaking listserv: Address an email message to: <majordomo@iglou.com>

Type the following in the message area: Subscribe pnpolicy Your name Send the e-mail message and expect a reply within 48 hours.

To unsubscribe: Send the email message to <pnpolicy-request@iglou.com> and type: Unsubscribe in the message area.

If you are unsubscribing because you have changed your email address, send the unsubscribe message from your old address; then send a new subscribe message from your new address.